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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Communications Radio-TV Division Washington, DC 20250-1340 (202)720-4330

Letter No. 2627

September 10, 1993



In an address to employees, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy announced his plan to restructure USDA. He said it will improve the delivery of service to customers, remain consistent with the Department's mandated missions, provide improvements for employees, and save taxpayer's money. The number of headquarters agencies and offices will be reduced from 43 to 30. A new single unit, the Farm Service Agency, will be created by merging ASCS, FmHA, and FCIC. USDA photo by Bob Nichols.

NEW STRUCTURE -- While the USDA headquarters restructuring focuses on combining functions to create efficiency and better service, the field reorganization will use collocation, common service and computer areas to reduce the number of field offices from 3,700 to 2,485. A new National Appeals Division will combine the appeals divisions of FmHA and ASCS. The Foreign Agricultural Service will be combined with the Office of International Cooperation and Development to create a new International Trade Service Agency. Rural development will be accomplished by three new organizations: the Rural Utilities Service will combine telephone and electric programs of the Rural Electrification Administration and the water and sewer programs of the Rural Development Administration; the Rural Community Development Service will include FmHA housing programs and loan programs of RDA and REA; and the Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service will include RDA and REA business development programs, the Agricultural Cooperative Service, and the Alternative Agricultural Research and Commercialization Center. A complete plan will be released later this month for the USDA Service Centers.

OTHER CHANGES -- Among actions announced in the plan by Secretary Espy to restructure USDA, will be a newly created Food and Consumer Service. It will combine the current Food and Nutrition Service with the Office of Consumer Advisor. A new Natural Resources Conservation Service will combine the Soil Conservation Service with ASCS conservation cost share programs. The Forest Service remains a separate agency. An Office of Agricultural Environmental Quality will provide guidance on environmental issues. The Federal Grain Inspection Service will be combined with the Packers and Stockyards Administration. The Agricultural Research Service, Extension Service, Cooperative State Research Service, and the National Agricultural Library will be combined into a new Agricultural Research and Education Service. A new Agricultural Economics Service will combine the Economics Research Service and the Office of Energy. Some of the reforms can be achieved by the Secretary's administrative authority, others will require congressional action or Executive Order. A legislative package is being developed.

SAVINGS -- The changes are designed to provide a better level of services at lower cost through more efficient use of resources, generating \$1.3 billion in savings and a staff reduction of 7,500 employees over the next five years. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

RURAL ECONOMIC GROWTH -- Recent studies show that rural jobs have increased the most in industries not related to farming. The nonmetro average showed a gain of 11 jobs in off-farm industries for each on-farm job lost. Farming's ability to create new jobs is limited. Economists say that counties where farming is important could increase employment by providing initiatives to encourage nonfarm businesses. Rural enterprise zones, rural incubators, or investment in technology to overcome problems of remoteness are among strategies that could be used to expand nonfarm jobs. Developing new industrial uses for traditional farm commodities or for new nontraditional crops may also help sustain jobs in the farm sector. **Contact: Jacqueline Salsgiver (202) 219-0525.**

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION -- National standards to define organic food and assure consumers that food marketed as organic meets certain standards is being addressed by the USDA's National Organic Standards Board. The board has established six committees to carry out the tasks: Crop Standards; Livestock; Processing and Handling; Materials, International; and Accreditation. The board has conducted forums and open meetings, and solicited public comment in advance of the rulemaking process. The input has established a need to balance consumer and producer interests. Strict regulations may help to instill consumer confidence, but unreasonable production standards, expensive testing, excessive paperwork and costly certification fees will discourage organic producers. **Contact: Julie Anton (202) 720-8042.**

CO-OPS ACTIVE -- U.S. farmer cooperatives sold a record amount of goods last year, up 4 percent to nearly \$80 billion dollars. The increased volume was due primarily to higher prices for milk and food grains, the higher production of grains, oilseeds and milk, and improved sales of farm supplies. The sales records were set by fewer cooperatives, down 174 to 4,320. Mergers, consolidations and termination of business reduced the number of cooperatives. Net income also declined, down 7 percent to \$1.5 billion. **Contact: Patrick Duffey (202) 690-1384.**

USEFUL BYPRODUCT -- Ethanol production is expected to total 2 billion gallons in 1995. This could increase farm income about \$170 million. A byproduct from the manufacturing of ethanol is xylitol. Currently xylitol is imported from Finland and used in chewing gum. It imparts a cool mint-like sensation to the mouth and does not cause tooth decay. USDA researchers have found a method of breaking down corn fiber to release xylose, used in making xylitol. The ethanol industry currently sells corn fiber and fermentation products as cattle feed for 6 cents per pound. If the xylose process can be expanded for large-scale production, obtaining xylitol from corn fiber is a potential value-added byproduct from the ethanol industry. **Contact: Timothy Leathers (309) 685-4011.**

BROILER EXPANSION -- Labor Day purchases boosted broiler prices to near 60 cents per pound, the highest this year. Net returns should remain in the 5-10 cents per pound range for the rest of the year. This is expected to continue a 5 percent expansion in production. **Joel Moore (202) 720-3244.**

SALT TOLERANT TOMATOES -- When scientists crossbred a wild tomato from the Galapagos Islands with commercial varieties, they produced plants with 25 percent more salt tolerance. Researchers will select the best tomatoes as forerunners of salt-tolerant commercial varieties. That can help tomato growers in the southwest including California, where half the 8.6 million irrigated acres have some excess sodium chloride or other salts in the soil. **Contact: Michael Shannon (714) 369-4834.**

EAT A VARIED DIET -- Recent research shows that diets high in alcohol or fructose, used in most processed foods and beverages, can interfere with the metabolism of iron and put it in a form that is not useable. The excess iron leads to the formation of molecules that can result in damage to cell membranes in the heart and pancreas. Reducing the amount of iron in the diet, or substituting starch for fructose reduced abnormalities. To ensure that nutrient interactions remain in balance, scientists recommend eating a wide variety of food in moderation. **Contact: Meira Fields (301) 504-9412.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1892 -- Agriculture Secretary **Mike Espy** has announced the plan to reorganize and streamline the Agriculture Department. **Brenda Curtis** reviews the plan to reinvent USDA. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1374 -- Reinventing USDA; USDA's fall color hotline; Jefferson letters found at USDA library; fresh start for school lunches; Colorado Gator delight. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1884 -- USDA News Highlights; comments needed for 1994 farm program common provisions; consolidating USDA; ag income update; controlling disease with disease. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1637 -- Domestic sweetener source; xylitol, a sweet alternative; making ethanol cheaper; beetle fights disease; aspirin protects plants? (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Monday, September 20, wheat outlook; U.S. ag trade update; Tuesday, September 21, weekly weather and crop outlook, catfish processing, sugar outlook; Wednesday, September 22, aquaculture outlook, world coffee situation; Thursday, September 23, Asia/Pacific Rim outlook, citrus production outlook; Friday, September 24, livestock/poultry update. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on nonchlorine bleach developed by USDA research; **Patrick O'Leary** reports on rare Thomas Jefferson letters found at the National Agricultural Library; **Pat** also reports on USDA's fall color hotline; **Will Pemble** reports on recycling phone books as a mulch for crops.

ACTUALITIES -- Agriculture Secretary **Mike Espy** and other USDA officials on the Clinton Administration's plan to reinvent and streamline the Department of Agriculture. Includes B-roll of Sept. 7 news conference announcement.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Patrick O'Leary** reports on meat safety labels; **Lynn Wyvill** reports on USDA forest products research; **DeBoria Janifer** reports on studies at USDA's National Arboretum, in Washington, D.C.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update** with anchors **Eric Parsons** and **Lori Spiczka**. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

THE PASTURES...look as good as on June 1st, says **Mike LePorte** (KRVN, Lexington, NE). Most row crop producers say they have not used any irrigation all summer, and if they can avoid high winds and hail should have good crops. But the rain has created problems putting up hay for winter. Prices will likely be high early next year. Mike says the station is recovering from a series of storms it endured in mid-summer. One tower has been replaced, two others are to be rebuilt, the roof on the transmitter building has been replaced and the transmitter repaired. Mike says its been a trying year for farmers and the station.

NAFTA...is favored by those producers who are aware of its provisions, says **Lee McCoy** (Texas Agri-Business Network, Dallas). But many of the producers tell him that they have concerns about the environmental aspects. They want to be sure that the pact's environmental regulations are fully enforced. Lee says cotton producers in his area should get well this year. Range conditions are drying but not critical. Use has lessened as producers take their cattle to market.

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PRODUCERS HELD OFF...until the very end, but by the close of August it was obvious they wouldn't get a crop and began putting it under, says **Brian Langeland** (KLGR, Redwood Falls, MN). Cool temperatures, overcast skies, and excessive rain prevented development. The positive side is that producers are getting a jump on fall field work, but Brian says its been a very tough year and spring is a long time away.

A GOOD RAIN IS NEEDED...in Southwestern Missouri, says **Joann Locke** (KTTS, Springfield). Hay producers have harvested more this year than in many previous years. Joann broadcast live from the Ozark Empire Fair in Springfield. Attendance was down. Flood conditions kept many cattle producers at home. Attendance was also down at the Missouri State fair. Congratulations to Joann. She and Jim Pitkin, a beef cattle producer, were married this summer.

NEW OWNER...has made changes. **Bob Cockrum**, formerly of the Texas Agri-Business Network, Dallas, is looking. He can be reached at (214) 790-9684.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division

